



Proxy PR

The simplest, most logical, ethical, flexible, and truly democratic way to do PR!

AN OPEN LETTER RE BC'S MUCH-NEEDED ELECTORAL REFORM!

To: ***The Leaders of the BC Parties, and Members of the Legislative Assembly***

From: ***Jeff & Diana Jewell, Mission BC***

British Columbia's recent election demonstrates yet again that the *'First-Past-The-Post'* voting system (FPTP) always distorts the *'Will of the People'*—causing undemocratic imbalances between the parties in Parliament.

Fortunately, the two former Opposition parties (the NDP and the Green Party), which together hold a slender majority, have formed an agreement to work together—including a commitment to pursue their promises of Electoral Reform (ER)—through a referendum on some unspecified form of Proportional Representation (PR).

Given that the BC Liberals initiated the BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in 2004—and their present [leader so clearly explained \(as a political commentator in 2009\) why our Democracy needs Electoral Reform \(and why she then supported it\)](#)—one might hope that ER would now be embraced by all political parties, in a non-partisan commitment to finally make BC elections truly fair for all Citizens, all Parties and all candidates.

Unfortunately, the lesson from Canada's long history of failed ER initiatives—in the absence of principled and politically courageous leadership—is that any referendum on ER is doomed to defeat by negative campaigns covertly run by unprincipled political pros (backroom operators of the duopoly parties), who're experienced in the undemocratic practices of nurturing and exploiting public ignorance and indifference, apathy and anxiety.

The reality of why ER never wins in the dirty game of hardball politics under FPTP is really quite simple—and very sad for the People and for Democracy. FPTP rules are systemically biased—always distorting both how People vote (many Voters are coerced into so-called *'strategic voting'*—i.e. *'holding their nose'* and voting for *'the lesser of evils'*), and how the People's votes are mis-translated into election results (all votes for losing candidates—typically more than 50%—are effectively *'thrown away'* by the FPTP voting system).

All FPTP's distortions work to the advantage of the winners—and hence to the disadvantage of the losers. Periodically, some victimized loser promises Electoral Reform. But they are powerless until they become the Government, at which point the roles are reversed—as they're then the lucky beneficiaries of the unfair electoral system that they had vowed to replace! And this presents their ultimate test of character.

Canada's recent federal flirtation with Electoral Reform exposed how the PM and his Government shamefully failed their test of character and integrity. They were faithfully aided and abetted by their duopoly dance partner, the Conservative Party—which, in their role as Official Opposition, equally shamefully pretended that there's nothing wrong with FPTP, and scurrilously demanded that any ER should be subject to a referendum (well knowing that it would be politically sabotaged).

The Government was able to posture that there was no national consensus on electoral reform—based on a phony survey that *'discovered'* what everyone always knew—that most Citizens (just as most politicians) do not really know or care very much about voting systems. Also, the Government and its allies—addicted by then to the unaccountable power of their *'false-majority'* (a routine result of FPTP distortions)—conveniently forgot all the principled reasons why they had previously espoused ER with such seeming *'conviction'*, and deliberately ignored the fact that a vast majority of expert witnesses strongly advocated some form of PR.

So here we go again. The very notion of another study and referendum on Electoral Reform—having gone down that treacherous road so many times before—seems misguided (or disingenuous). Reconsideration of this dubious plan—a proven exercise in futility—is strongly urged. [Dr. Dennis Pilon, one of Canada's leading political scientists, has explained why a referendum on ER is unnecessary, inappropriate and inadvisable: (Pilon, Vancouver Sun Op-ed, 2017/05/29: [Change the voting system without a referendum](#))].

For those who may doubt the need and justification for Electoral Reform, an examination of BC's last seven elections (1991-2017) reveals that **every election under FPTP results in gross injustice**—to Citizens, Parties, and indeed to Democracy itself:

- Five of the seven elections produced a **'false majority'** Government—a pseudo-dictatorship with the winner holding 100% of the power based on less than 50% vote-share—and, in each case, with their majority being entirely due to FPTP distortions.
- Over these seven elections, FPTP distortions gave the Government an average bonus of 14.4 seats, and the Official Opposition an average handicap of 9.8 seats (i.e. the spread was on average 24.2 seats more than it would have been under PR).
- The 1996 election produced the **'Wrong Winner'** with a **'false majority'** Government—FPTP's most disgusting distortion; the winning NDP won 39 seats with just **39.5%** vote-share—whereas the losing Liberals won only 33 seats with **41.8%** vote-share.
- The 2001 election produced a **'blow-out'**—largely due to FPTP distortions—as the Liberals took 77 of 79 seats (**97%**) on **57.6%** vote-share. FPTP distortions gave the winners an unearned bonus of 31.5 seats—by taking 31.5 earned seats from the losers. FPTP distortions produced a **Government without an effective Opposition**—the antithesis of Parliamentary Democracy.
- The exceptionally close 2017 election produced a **"hung Parliament"** (i.e. with no party holding a majority). While FPTP distortions were smaller than usual (bonuses of about 8 seats for the Liberals and 6 seats for the NDP), the impact was vastly greater because of the fragility of the Minority Government—due to the fact that FPTP cheated the Greens by about 12 seats.

There are many more reasons and detailed analyses that form an indisputable case against FPTP. Indeed, the only reason some parties (i.e. the *duopoly*) want to block ER and retain FPTP is that *they* are the regular beneficiaries of its distortions.

There remains the question of which form of Proportional Representation to choose. The fundamental objective of PR is to achieve a balance of Parliamentary voting power that's approximately proportional to the vote-share of each party. There are many forms of the traditional method of achieving PR—based on clever ways to elect approximately the *'right'* number of members from each party—or select the necessary number of *'compensatory'* top-up members. Such methods differ in distortion, complexity and consequences—but all forms of PR are much more fair and have much less distortion than FPTP.

However, in the Digital Age, there's a new and far better way to do PR—which is much simpler and automatically produces perfect PR with zero distortion—without the complexities and consequences of traditional PR. It's called **P^{roxy}PR**—and it not only guarantees to 'make every vote count'—but it uses the actual votes of every Citizen as the Proxy voting power of each Party in Parliament! Here's a summary of how **P^{roxy}PR** works, and the advantages it offers over other ER alternatives:

- Every Citizen's vote is held in trust by an elected representative of the chosen Party—and cast as a Proxy vote with every vote in Parliament (counted by computer). This ensures perfect proportionality—because no vote is ever wasted! (Some accommodation should be provided for a small party that achieves a threshold (e.g. 3%) but fails to win a seat.)
- Votes for losing candidates are retained by the Party and reassigned to an elected member. This is much more fair for both the Voters and the Parties. Every Voter can confidently vote for their true *1st-choice* (i.e. no more *'strategic voting'*). This also eliminates the *'vote splitting'* problem (whereby two similar parties divide an electorate—ensuring their mutual defeat).
- **P^{roxy}PR** also provides flexible options to achieve balanced representation by Party, region, gender and demographics.
- If a member is absent, their proxy votes could be temporarily reassigned to some other member(s) of that Party.
- If a member *'crossed the floor'* to sit with another Party, their votes would be retained and reassigned by the original Party.
- The Speaker would have one vote—their own single vote! All of their Citizens' votes would be retained and reassigned by the Party. [*n.b.: This would eliminate the Speaker issues and instability that might arise from an NDP-Green Minority Government.*]
- A *'tied vote'*—based on the proxy votes of all Citizens—would most likely never occur—but would be resolved by the Speaker's vote. Such certainty should ensure a stable Government—even with elections that don't produce a *'seat-wise'* majority.
- As specific example, in BC's 2017 election, the Liberal Party received 796,672 votes—just **1,566** more than the NDP. But the Greens received **332,387** votes (and other parties received 49,749 votes). Hence, the true magnitude of the People's support for the Green Party was vastly greater (by a multiple of 212 times) than the vote margin between the top two parties.

BC now has another chance at Electoral Reform. Let's not blow this opportunity. Let's do it *right* this time. Let's do **P^{roxy}PR!** **P^{roxy}PR** is the *'made-in-BC'* solution that can transform BC's Democracy into the model for all of Canada—and for the World!